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TAGS: [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [ETRD](#) [IT](#)
SUBJECT: ITALY: PM BERLUSCONI IN BROAD AGREEMENT ON KEY
FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald P. Spogli for reasons 1.4 (b) a...

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¶1. (C/NF) The Ambassador met June 6 with PM Silvio Berlusconi and U/S Gianni Letta to frame issues President Bush may discuss with Berlusconi during their June 12 bilateral meeting in Rome. Berlusconi said he saw no problematic issues in the U.S.-Italian relationship. In office for less than one month, Berlusconi indicated his government's thinking on several matters was still evolving.

¶2. (C/NF) The Ambassador said the President may discuss lifting caveats in Afghanistan, increasing pressure on Iran, Italian energy security, and Lebanon. Independently, Berlusconi raised GMOs, which he described as "the only way to feed the world," noting that the current situation had reinforced his support for GMOs.

¶3. (S/NF) Afghanistan: The Ambassador thanked Berlusconi for Italy's commitments in Afghanistan and urged Berlusconi to lift caveats, especially geographic ones limiting freedom of movement. The Ambassador noted these prevented Italian Carabinieri from providing on-site training and mentoring to Afghan police. Letta said the GOI was committed to increasing operational flexibility for Italian soldiers deployed to Afghanistan and was working on how it would do that. The Ambassador also told Berlusconi that we continue to receive disturbing reports of Italians paying-off local warlords and other combatants. Berlusconi agreed this should stop.

¶4. (C/NF) Iran: The Ambassador complimented Berlusconi for the recent tough tone his government has taken on Iran and said the President would want to discuss how to increase pressure on the Iranian regime. Berlusconi called Ahmadinejad a "crazy nut" who must be isolated and asked how his government should respond to Italian companies asking about doing business in Iran. The Ambassador replied firmly, no new investments.

¶5. (C/NF) Energy Security: The Ambassador told Berlusconi the President was keenly interested in energy security and praised favorably recent positions taken by government figures in support of nuclear power generation. He added that while we are not anti-Russia, Europe's (including Italy's) over-reliance on Russia for its energy needs was a serious concern. Berlusconi agreed, saying his government will pursue several avenues toward energy diversification while noting that Italy's energy dependence required strong relations with Russia.

¶6. (C/NF) Lebanon: The Ambassador told Berlusconi the President would likely be interested in his views on Lebanon and UNIFIL. Letta responded that the government was still

reviewing its thinking on Lebanon.

17. (C/NF) COMMENT: Berlusconi is very much looking forward to the President's visit, sees himself and Italy as being on the same page as the U.S., virtually across the board, and will be ready to discuss all of the above issues with POTUS on June 12.
SPOGLI